

THE
DYING HERO:

A
POEM,

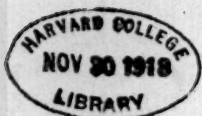
By MR. SHEPHERD.

——— STAT MAGNI NOMINIS UMBRA. Luc.

L O N D O N:

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MDCC LXXIX.



Gift of
J. Pierpont Morgan

THE
D Y I N G H E R O.

A WAKE, my Muse, if in these dreary glades,
Where the scant arborage forms its niggard shades,
Where murky vapours from the stagnate lake
The palsied limbs with piercing agues shake,
And ceaseless rolls Disease's 'scutcheon'd car,
Hear'd in the trophies of the fell catarrh ;
Ere yet along the winding Maese I rove,
And woo Hygeia in the Belgic grove ;
Awake, if in these realms the Muse can sing :
Not such the plains, where first she imp'd her wing ;
Those plains where Isis winds her silver streams,
Isis, the consort of majestic Thames.
Rich with the commerce of the World he flows,
And on her margin deathless laurel grows.

B

Thrice

Thrice happy pair ! be his bright Merit's claim :
 And her's, to rank it in the roll of Fame.
 Even now he pours his heroes on the main ;
 And in her haunts the Muse's honour'd train
 At Britain's shrine shall consecrate each deed,
 And give their daring toils a glorious meed :
 While lovely Isis, as she rolls along,
 Teaches her curling waves the glorious song.

But ah, how vain the Hero's splendid race !
 In narrow bounds how limited the space,
 The first fair exploit and the grave between,
 The hour of glory, and the tearful scene ;
 Which shews him stript of all his worldly pride,
 Compound of dust, and to the worm allied !

Say, thou, that boast'st from this vile spot thy birth,
 Say, canst thou raise, inhabitant of earth,
 Thy mind's keen eye, and in idea trace
 The regions of unmeasurable space ;

See

See in the stars new suns, and round them whirl'd
 In rapid movements; many a circling world?
 Then the purged eye, purged by the lustrous sight,
 To realms of darkness brought from realms of light,
 In equal shades shall view Ambition's schemes,
 The warrior's conquests, and the madman's dreams.

If in the spark, that warms this earthy cell,
 A single ray of genuine greatness dwell;
 'Tis in the reach of thought, that bold and free
 Extends like light o'er air, and earth, and sea;
 And calls, enobled by each deed of worth,
 The honest labours of the virtuous forth:
 Destined for other worlds, and better fates,
 Where real virtue real glory waits.

Happy the man, who, free from public strife,
 Steals through some peaceful path of private life;
 Superiour to the tinkling of a name,
 Smiles at applause, and counts fair Virtue Fame:

Applause,

Applause, that stamps, where'er she waves her wings,
 No sterling worth on characters or things ;
 Leaves Merit, dimly beaming 'mid distress,
 And measures all her triumphs by success.

Thrice happy he, beneath the acorn's shade,
 Which, trench'd in earth, his ancestors had laid,
 Who hears the milk-maids carol at his pail,
 And in his barns the musick of the flail :
 Lord of a plain, but hospitable board,
 Master of wealth sufficient to afford
 Cloaths to the naked, to the hungry bread ;
 And hears them call down blessings on his head.
 What though, Contentment bounding his desires,
 His soul ne'er kindled with Ambition's fires ;
 Though, unseduc'd by Power's enchanting wand,
 He spread no havock through his native land ;
 Nor harbour'd in his breast so mean a thought,
 As the acquiescence of fame thus dearly bought ;
 Say,

Say, ye wise few, on Virtue's sacred plan,
Is he, or WASHINGTON, the happy man?

Give me to mingle round his social fire,
Give me, ye Powers, I ask no converse higher,
To hear the man, in years and virtue old,
The institutes of Wisdom's page unfold :
To see, the moral lesson while he frames
To warm the youthful mind with Virtue's flames,
Suspended on his lips, his prattling race
Drink sage instruction with a fond embrace.
Give me his day of peace, his even of quiet ;
And leave to R——y nonsense, noise, and riot.

Look round the world, and say, how little here
Has Wealth to give, or Poverty to fear ;
How little in the meteor Fame we find ;
The *ignis fatuus* of a noble mind.
To learn, of boast how vain, how poor avail,
Is pomp and power, attend a simple tale.

In days of yore, for these our lays unfold,
 Mark'd with no modern traits, a tale of old ;
 RODERICK, who has not heard of RODERICK's name ?
 High in the annals of immortal Fame,
 Fear'd by his foes, by willing realms obeyed,
 Wide o'er the North a potent sceptre sway'd.
 A savage race, whose mind's humaner glow
 Ne'er smooth'd the rugged sternness of the brow,
 He ruled : their comforts and their wants were few ;
 And war and rapine all the arts they knew.

By Nature form'd with every power of mind,
 To bless a people, and adorn mankind ;
 He made the public weal the monarch's care,
 And bade the world his happy influence share.
 Th' impassion'd mind's tumultuous tide to stem,
 And call forth lustre in th' unpolish'd gem,
 To humanize the soul, and make the man,
 RODERICK for this conceiv'd the liberal plan.

On

On the loved Arts his power indulgence shed,
 And Genius rear'd her long-neglected head.
 Erst rude as wilds of Hyperborean snow,
 Their polish'd minds assume a milder glow ;
 Their savage nature softer manners form,
 So Summer suns succeed the Winter's storm :
 While, with a thousand blessings in her train,
 Peace, blandly smiling, mark'd th' auspicious reign.

Above the vain parade of stars and strings,
 That lures the little minds of little Kings ;
 Above the joys that gild their leisure hour,
 Above the little piques, that stain their power ;
 RODERICK, for other cares and joys design'd,
 Deem'd the high workings of the human mind :
 And oft retiring from the pomp of courts,
 Where Wisdom sickens, and gay Folly sports,
 Turn'd from court beauties, under Thespian shades
 To hold soft dalliance with th' Aonian maids ;

Or

Or through the groves of Academus roved,
The first to cultivate the arts he loved.

The bower of pleasure, and the bed of ease,
The mind's seduction, and the mind's disease,
He fled, as from a Syren's loose embrace,
His bosom panting high in Glory's race :
Glory, the nurse of all that's great below ;
Glory, the source of every human woe :
A potent drug, directed well, or ill,
The mind's best cordial, or most poisonous pill.
Her powerful magic RODERICK'S breast assail'd,
And o'er the soul, where Love was foil'd, prevail'd.
For her alone he felt his bosom burn,
For her he left the slighted Arts to mourn :
While, late the portion of th' industrious swain,
Embattled squadrons crowd the glittering plain.

To curb the proud, to succour the distressed,
And whisper comfort to the mourner's breast ;

To

To wrest the bolt from stern Oppression's hand,
 And scatter blessings o'er a peaceful land;
 Were cares he deem'd beneath the nobler aim
 Of him, who grappled for the wreath of Fame.
 For that he mingled in the deathful fray;
 Glory cried, on: and havock mark'd the way.
 To sing the horrors of the crimson field,
 With horse to horse, and shield opposed to shield,
 While dread ANDATE bids the battle bleed,
 Ill suits the tenour of our rustic reed.

But hark, the shouts of conquest rend the sky,
 The ecchoing hills resound; " they fly, they fly."
 The trembling foes their backs inglorious show,
 And Conquest twines the wreath on RODERICK's brow.
 But ah! in this mixt state, without alloy,
 On what blest bosom beams the cherub Joy!
 For see, amidst the carnage of the field,
 Writhing in pain upon a blood-stain'd shield,

D

His

His forrowing friends the brave PALERMO bear;
 Who drags with feeble arm his shiver'd spear.

‘ What means that spectacle, the monarch cries ?
 PALERMO bleeding !—Royal Liege, replies
 The dying Hero, grant—grant what, dear friend ?—
 Friend of my youth, exclaims the Prince, extend
 Far as the Pole your wish: a service name,
 Worthy thy merits, and your Prince's fame.
 Ask honour ; to thy name shall temples rise :
 Or if revenge your fiercer wish implies,
 Yon ravaged realm shall pay the dear-bought sacrifice.’

‘ Vain is the honour, that pursues the bier,
 Vain as revenge to the death-deafen'd ear :
 To sooth my pride, no temples I require ;
 No slaughter'd victims to appease my ire :
 I ask a present boon, rejoins the chief,
 From death a respite, and from pain relief.
 From the wide maw of the voracious grave,
 Which thou so oft has gorged, thy soldier save :

Sooth,

Sooth, royal Sire, this agonising pain,
 With vigour nerve my feeble limbs again ;
 Give me again my faithful sword to wield,
 And charge once more on Glory's crimson field.

‘ Ah! could, dear friend, an empire's ransom save
 My gallant soldier from the hungry grave—
 But all an empire's ransom, all my power
 Will not one moment stay the fatal hour.’

‘ Oh! then prepare me in that distant bourn,
 Whither I go, and whence is no return,
 Where the blest portal flaming Seraphs guard,
 And patient merit meets a sure reward,
 Some glorious mansion of eternal joy,
 Secure from change, and free from all alloy :
 Bid angel hosts repress the powers of hell,
 And chant sweet requiems at my passing knell.’

‘ Let not the dread of future woes control
 The steady firmness of PALERMO's soul,

The

The soul—perception, by a happier name ;
 'The soul—a breath, a sound, a meteor flame :
 The harmony of matter well arranged ;
 Nothing, the mode of its existence changed.'

' Now, on my life, you mock your soldier's woes ;
 And shake the drooping soul, that asks repose,
 With vague surmise. And will conjecture arm
 This fleeting meteor against Death's alarm ?
 If e'er, your glory all your soldier's aim,
 I fought your battles, and advanced your fame ;
 If e'er I bade my furious squadrons spoil
 Heaven's gracious boon, and mock the ploughman's toil ;
 If e'er, to satiate your relentless ire,
 I ravaged realms, wrapp'd sleeping towns in fire ;
 Let loose on Chastity Lust's burning rage,
 And bade the sabre spare nor sex, nor age :
 Shew me, not by the rackings of the brain,
 By subtle metaphysic's meteor train,

Hypotheses,

Hypotheses, that link on link depend,
 Without beginning, and without an end ;
 Or fancies vague, that lead the mind astray,
 Where Contemplation wings her doubtful way :
 Convince my senses, shew beyond a doubt,
 That when this feeble lamp of life is out,
 The intellectual ray, which I call Soul,
 That unimpair'd now darts from Pole to Pole,
 Shall with the building, that enshrines it, cease ;
 Prove, shew me that, and hush my soul to peace.
 Alas ! alas ! those downcast looks explain,
 How vainly spent my life, my prayer how vain.

Oh, for another age, immortal power,
 At thy dread shrine my forrowing soul to pour !
 For, “ had I served my God with half the care,
 “ I served my Prince, that God had heard my prayer.”

F I N I S.

(71)
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